

Talking Points
“Ground-making” at Port of Gulfport
July 9, 2009
Gulfport, Mississippi

- Today, we officially kick off construction of the first phase of a restoration plan that will lift our Port to new heights, literally and figuratively.
- This day has been a long time coming and it's finally here due to the hard work of a lot of people.
- Proud of the Commissioners who have led this effort – John Rester, Lenny Sawyer, Jim Simpson, Frances Turnage, and Frank Wilem; and the port's outstanding executive director and CEO – Don Allee.
- Many community and business organizations have supported this restoration plan from the beginning.
- And, I want to give a big “thank you” to Donald Evans and the International Longshoremen's Association, AFL-CIO, Local # 1303, whose support has been and continues to be so critical. They know jobs build an economy.
- This is the start of something really, really big.
- Ultimately, this project will:
 - create 6,500 direct jobs, 8,400 induced jobs, and 1,700 indirect jobs.
 - generate annual revenue of \$10 billion in added personal income and \$1.6 billion in direct revenue to the local economy.

- elevate Port facilities to 25 feet above sea level, a height that will protect the Port, its tenants, and the Gulfport community from future storm surges.

- In that regard, I am pleased to report a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) has been issued to the Port of Gulfport by FEMA, giving the authorization to initiate design to raise its base ground elevation to 25 feet above sea level.
- Essentially, this means FEMA has determined that elevating the Port on fill has no adverse impact on the surrounding environment.
- New jobs at the Port are good for all aspects of the economy, from housing to tax collections to infrastructure development.
- This Port of Gulfport project is a vital component of Mississippi's comprehensive plan to recover from the worst natural disaster in American history.
- From the early days after Hurricane Katrina we knew housing restoration, economic recovery, and infrastructure repair would be critical to our goal of coastal renaissance, and the Port project touches all three.
- While 70 percent of funds awarded through the Community Development Block Grant program were dedicated to helping restore the housing stock — including affordable housing for low and moderate income families — the remaining funds are at work rebuilding our economy and repairing our infrastructure.
- This is economic development at its best, and a proud day for Mississippi.